



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**USCIS Overview
March 2005**



USCIS Overview

Department of Homeland Security

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the most significant transformation of the U.S. government since 1947, when Harry S. Truman merged the various branches of the U.S. Armed Forces into the Department of Defense to better coordinate the nation's defense against military threats.

DHS represents a similar consolidation, both in style and substance. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against America on September 11th, 2001, President George W. Bush decided 22 previously disparate domestic agencies needed to be coordinated into one department to protect the nation against threats to the homeland. On November 25, 2002, the President signed the Homeland Security Act of 2002. This law transferred functions formerly assigned to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the Department of Justice to the Department of Homeland Security. (http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/hr_5005_enr.pdf)

DHS Vision Statement

Preserving our freedoms, protecting America... we secure our homeland.

DHS Mission Statement

We will lead the unified national effort to secure America. We will prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the Nation. We will ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free-flow of commerce.

DHS Core Values

Personal attributes expected of every Department of Homeland Security employee include:

- Integrity: "Service Before Self"
- Vigilance: "Guarding America"
- Respect: "Honoring Our Partners"

DHS Strategic Goals

AWARENESS – Identify and understand threats, assess vulnerabilities, determine potential impacts, and disseminate timely information to our homeland security partners and the American public.

PREVENTION – Detect, deter, and mitigate threats to our homeland.



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PROTECTION – Safeguard our people and their freedoms, critical infrastructure, property, and the economy of our Nation from acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies.

RESPONSE – Lead, manage, and coordinate the national response to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies.

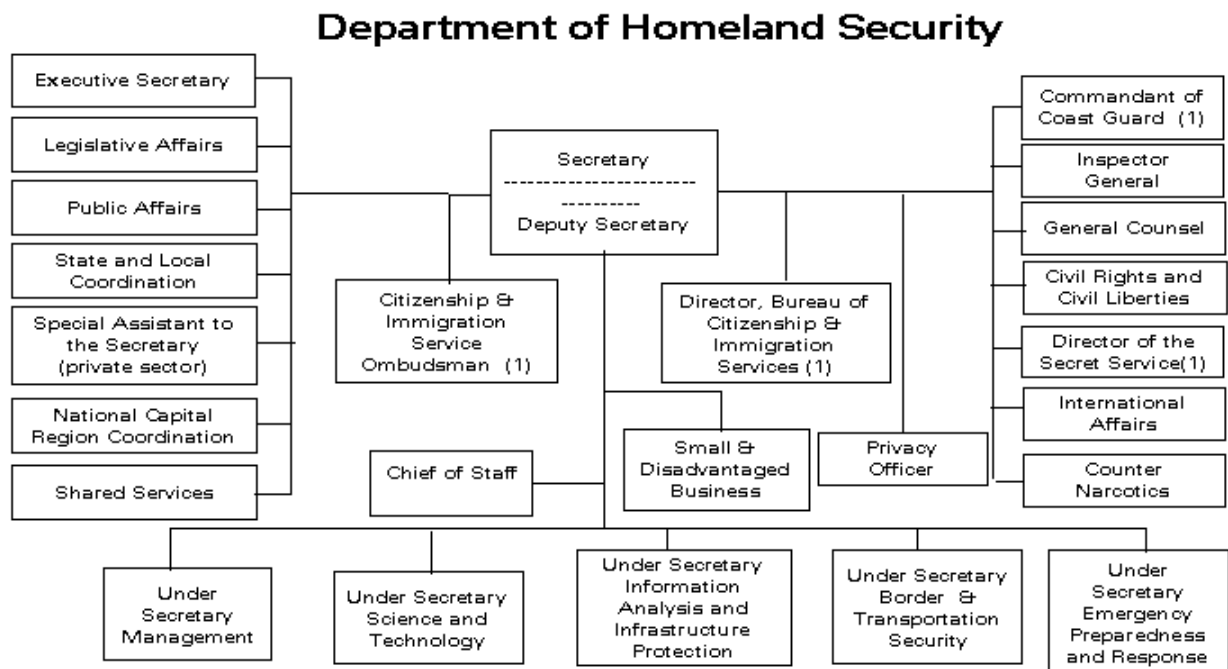
RECOVERY – Lead national, state, local, and private sector efforts to restore services and rebuild communities after acts of terrorism, natural disasters, or other emergencies.

SERVICE – Serve the public effectively by facilitating lawful trade, travel, and immigration.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE – Value our most important resource, our people. Create a culture that promotes a common identity, innovation, mutual respect, accountability, and teamwork to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and operational synergies.



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Note (1): Effective March 1st, 2003



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Biography of DHS Secretary Chertoff

On February 15, 2005, Judge Michael Chertoff was sworn in as the second Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Chertoff formerly served as United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Secretary Chertoff was previously confirmed by the Senate to serve in the Bush Administration as Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. As Assistant Attorney General, he helped trace the 9/11 terrorist attacks to the al-Qaida network, and worked to increase information sharing within the FBI and with state and local officials.

Before joining the Bush Administration, Chertoff was a Partner in the law firm of Latham & Watkins. From 1994 to 1996, he served as Special Counsel for the U.S. Senate Whitewater Committee.

Prior to that, Chertoff spent more than a decade as a federal prosecutor, including service as U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, First Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey, and Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. As United States Attorney, Chertoff investigated and prosecuted several significant cases of political corruption, organized crime, and corporate fraud.

Chertoff graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College in 1975 and magna cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1978. From 1979-1980 he served as a clerk to Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, Jr.

Secretary Chertoff is married to Meryl Justin Chertoff and has two children.



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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

On March 1, 2003, USCIS was created as a component in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to administer the citizenship and immigration services of the United States. USCIS includes approximately 15,000 employees and contractors, and is headed by the Director of USCIS, who reports directly to the Deputy Secretary for Homeland Security and holds the rank of Under Secretary.

USCIS Mission:

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services will secure America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.

USCIS Vision:

The US Citizenship and Immigration Service will strengthen America's future by becoming a customer-focused innovator of benefits processing, a catalyst for citizenship education, instruction and outreach, a recognized and credible source of useful information, and a leading contributor to the security of the US.

USCIS Goals:

1. Ensure National Security
2. Improve Customer Service
3. Eliminate the Backlog of Immigration Benefit Applications

USCIS Core Values:

- **Integrity** - We shall always strive for the highest level of **Integrity** in our dealings with our customers, our fellow employees, and the citizens of the United States of America. We shall be ever mindful of the importance of the trust they have placed in us to administer the nation's immigration system fairly, honestly, and correctly.
- **Respect** - We will demonstrate **Respect** in all of our actions. We will ensure that everyone we affect will be treated with dignity and courtesy regardless of the outcome of the decision. We will model this principle in all of our activities, with each other, our customers, and the public. Through our actions, this organization will become known as an example of Respect, Dignity, and Courtesy.



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- **Ingenuity** - As we meet the challenges to come, we will strive to find the most effective means to accomplish our goals. We will use **Ingenuity**, resourcefulness, creativity, and sound management principles to strive for world-class results. We will approach every challenge with a balance of enthusiasm and wisdom in our effort to fulfill our vision.

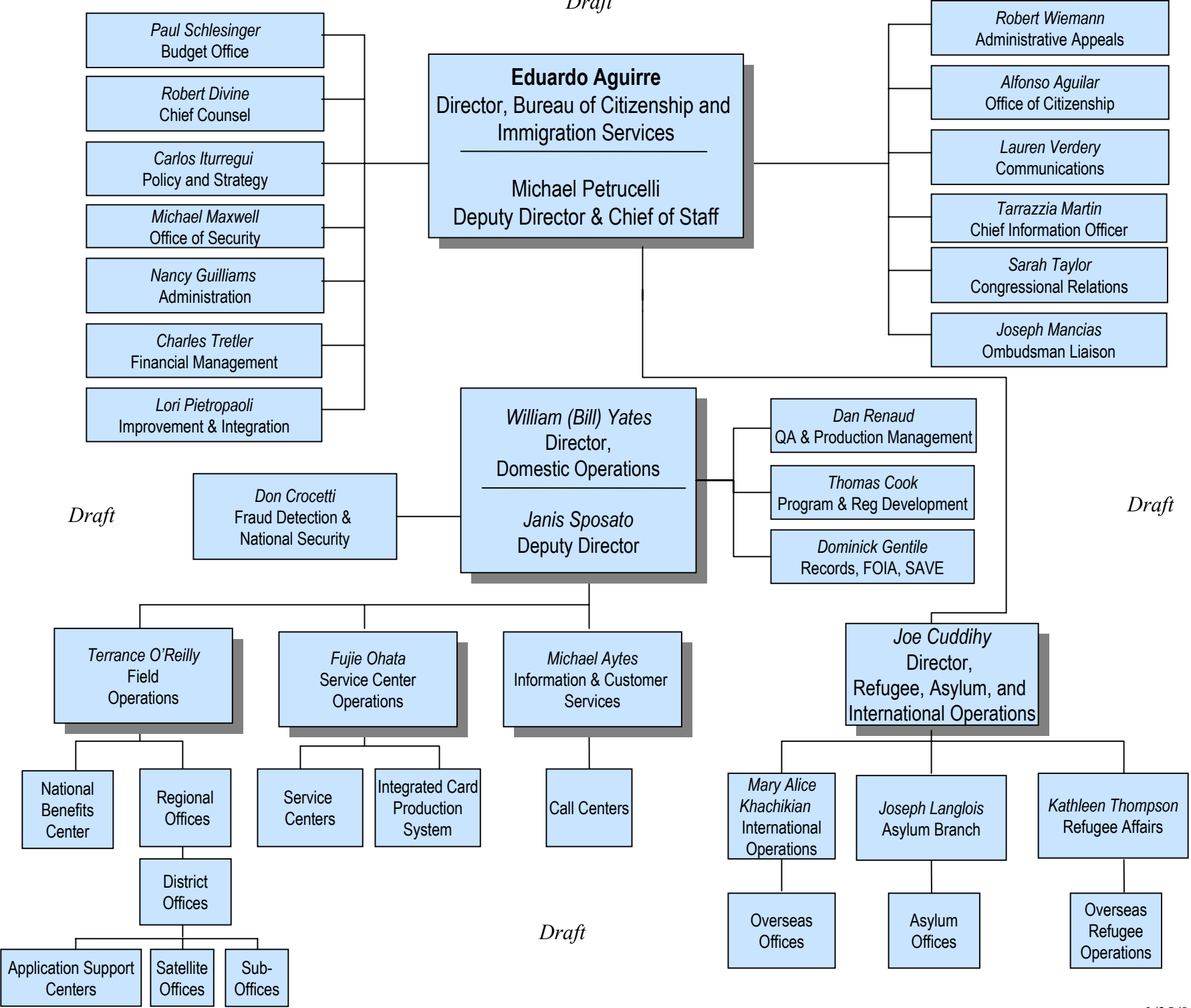
USCIS Duties:

USCIS processes all immigrant and non-immigrant benefits provided to visitors of the United States, including:

- *Family-based petitions* -- facilitating the process for close relatives to immigrate, gain permanent residency, work, etc.;
- *Employment-based petitions* -- facilitating the process for current and prospective employees to immigrate or stay in the U.S. temporarily;
- *Asylum and Refugee processing* -- adjudicating asylum and the processing of refugees;
- *Naturalization* – approving citizenship of eligible persons who wish to become U.S. citizens;
- *Special status programs* – adjudicating eligibility for U.S. immigration status as a form of humanitarian aid to foreign nationals; and,
- *Document issuance and renewal* – including verifying eligibility, producing and issuing immigration documents.

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Biographies of USCIS Executives

Eduardo Aguirre, Jr.

Director, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Eduardo Aguirre, Jr., was nominated by President George W. Bush to be Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a key leadership position in the Department of Homeland Security, in February 2003. The U.S. Senate, recognizing that his sound managerial and business skills, international perspective and commitment to service would be valuable assets for USCIS, Homeland Security and the Nation, confirmed the nomination on June 19, 2003.

Eduardo Aguirre was sworn-in as the first USCIS Director by Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge in the historic Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on August 15, 2003.

Named “one of the 100 most influential Hispanics in the nation” by *Hispanic Business Magazine*, Mr. Aguirre has traveled extensively in Latin America, Europe and Asia promoting economic growth, international trade and business opportunities as a banker, honorary professor and representative of the United States government.

He joined the Department of Homeland Security from the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank), where he was Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer. From December 2001 to December 2002, he served as acting Chairman of the Bank and is credited with guiding the Bank through its Congressional reauthorization.

Prior to joining the Ex-Im Bank, Mr. Aguirre served as President of International Private Banking for Bank of America. In this capacity, he ran a highly profitable unit of this 50,000-employee industry leader. Over the course of his 24-year career with Bank of America, his team was consistently acknowledged for excellence in customer service and employee satisfaction.

Mr. Aguirre was appointed by then- Governor Bush to the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System for a six-year term, serving from 1996-1998 as chairman. President George H. W. Bush appointed him to the National Commission for Employment Policy; and the Supreme Court of Texas appointed him to the State Bar as a non-attorney Director.

His deep commitment to community service is also reflected by his involvement in numerous professional and civic boards, including the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Texas Children’s Hospital, St. Joseph’s Hospital, Bankers Association for Finance and Trade, and the Houston chapters of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.



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In 2002, Mr. Aguirre was bestowed the Order of Christopher Columbus by Hipolito Mejia, President of the Dominican Republic. The Order is the highest government honor for public sector leaders and was given in recognition of his achievements in facilitating trade and commerce in the Americas.

Mr. Aguirre holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the College of Business Administration at Louisiana State University. He is a graduate of the American Bankers Association's National Commercial Lending Graduate School, and has been awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Houston and the Universidad Tecnológica de Santiago in the Dominican Republic.

He and his wife, Maria Teresa, both emigrated from Cuba as unaccompanied minors at the age of 15. They maintain their home in Houston, where they have lived for nearly 30 years, and reside at present in Washington, D.C. The Aguirre's have two grown children, Eddy and Tessie.



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Michael Petrucelli **Deputy Director and Chief of Staff**

On April 7, 2003, Michael J. Petrucelli became the Deputy Director and Chief of Staff of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security.

Michael J. Petrucelli, a former State Department Foreign Service Officer and business executive with extensive experience promoting U.S.-Asia trade relations, most recently served as Senior Vice President for Operations and Chief of Staff of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank). Mr. Petrucelli was appointed to the Bank on June 28, 2001.

In 2000, Mr. Petrucelli worked on economic and business issues at the Federal Communications Commission in both the Office of Commissioner Furchtgott-Roth and the Satellite & Radio Communication Division of the FCC's International Bureau. He previously was Executive Director of the U.S.-Thailand Business Council, a trade association which promotes trade between the two countries. Before that Mr. Petrucelli was Director for Thailand, Burma and Financial Services at the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council. As a U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officer from 1992 to 1996, Mr. Petrucelli was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, the Bureau of Intelligence & Research in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Consulate General, Netherlands Antilles.

Mr. Petrucelli holds a master's degree in business administration from Goizueta Business School, Emory University, with concentrations in leadership and international business and also studied international business in the MBA program at Nijenrode University in The Netherlands. Mr. Petrucelli also holds a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Trinity College in Hartford, CT.

Mr. Petrucelli and his wife Ami Susan Petrucelli live in Bethesda, Maryland.

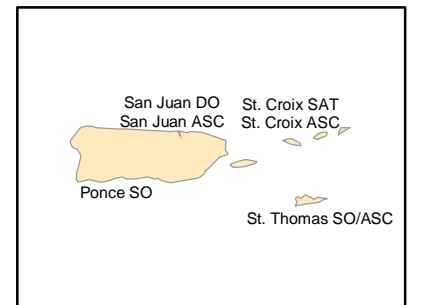
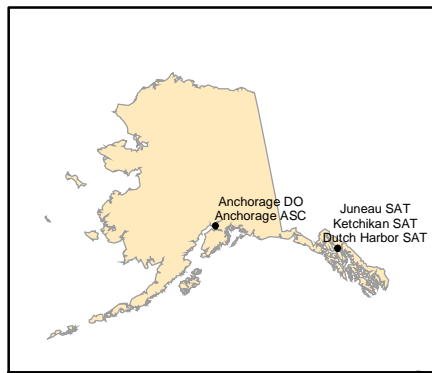
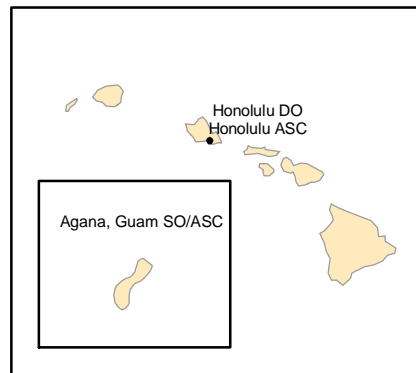
LEGEND

DO - District Office
SO - Sub Office
SAT - Satellite Office
ASC - Application Support Center
ERO,CRO, WRO - Regional Offices
ACB, ACD, ACL - Administrative Centers
CUSA - Citizenship Office

Offices appearing on same line
(e.g. DO/ASC) indicate co-located offices

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services National Facilities Map



revised 9/21/04

Map of USCIS Overseas Operations

Americas Region



European Region



Asia Region

- USCIS International District Offices are highlighted.



USCIS Overview

USCIS Headquarters Offices

Headquarters offices are located in Washington, DC and exist to support and guide USCIS offices around the world.

- **Office of Administration** plans, develops, implements, and evaluates agency-wide policies, procedures, and programs for Acquisition and Asset Management, Facilities, Human Capital, Logistics, Occupational Safety and Health, and Workers Compensation for the operation of centrally managed, agency-wide support activities, and for the direct delivery of administrative support to Headquarters.
- **Office of Administrative Appeals** reviews and adjudicates administrative appeals related to approximately 66 different petitions and applications.
- **Office of Budget** is responsible for USCIS budget formulation and execution.
- **Office of Chief Counsel (principal legal advisor)** consists of dedicated legal divisions advising and representing USCIS Operations both at Headquarters and in the field. Divisions include Adjudications Law, Refugee and Asylum Law, Commercial and Administrative Law, Ethics, Field Operations, Training, and Liaison. Each division is responsible for reviewing, interpreting, and providing legal advice and guidance to USCIS operational components and OCC field staff.
- **Office of the Chief Information Officer** provides leadership in the delivery of innovative, reliable and responsive information technology (IT) services to USCIS and its customers. IT includes application development operations and maintenance, IT security systems operations, network operations, enterprise architecture development and compliance as well as day-to-day operations of USCIS IT systems for the Headquarters and the field.
- **Office of Citizenship** promotes civic integration and instruction and training on citizenship responsibility for legal immigrants interested in becoming naturalized citizens of the United States, including development of educational materials and community outreach activities.



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- **Office of Communications** oversees and coordinates communication to both internal and external stakeholders to empower employees with the tools needed to perform their jobs, educate the public regarding USCIS benefits and services, and facilitate consistent messaging and imaging for USCIS.
- **Office of Congressional Relations** advises the Director on legislative matters and serves as primary point of contact for members of Congress and congressional staffers.
- **Office of Ombudsman Liaison** serves as the Director's representative to the DHS CIS Ombudsman and provides customer relationship management oversight and evaluation.
- **Office of Domestic Operations** ensures that information and benefits decisions are provided to domestic customers in a timely, accurate, consistent, courteous and professional manner.

Office of Field Operations is the top of the organizational hierarchy over USCIS Regional Offices, District Offices, Application Support Centers, Lockbox Operations, and the National Benefit Center. With these field offices under the central operational command of Field Operations, USCIS is able to promote uniform implementation of immigration benefits policy in support of USCIS' goal to further national security, to continue eliminating adjudications backlogs, and to implement solutions for improving immigration customer services.

Fraud Detection and National Security Unit (FDNS) develops, coordinates, and leads the national anti-fraud operations for USCIS and oversees and enhances policies and procedures pertaining to the performance of law enforcement (background) checks on applicants and petitioners. FDNS is USCIS' liaison with CBP and ICE on crosscutting matters, as well as our primary conduit to/from other law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The FDNS oversees Fraud Detection Units (FDUs) that are located in field offices and report to Headquarters. They are charged with detecting and pursuing immigration benefit frauds and work closely with USCIS immigration officers, ICE, and other agencies. The FDUs identify and refer aliens who pose a risk to national security and public safety to ICE and other law enforcement agencies.

Office of Information and Customer Services manages and coordinates the agency's information and customer service program, policies and activities, and directly manages the agency's customer service call center operations.

Performance Management Division is charged with developing the USCIS Backlog Elimination Plan and monitoring progress against the Plan; developing and managing the



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national quality program; analyzing and recommending resource allocation; and performing statistical data analysis.

Office of Records Services The **Office of Records Services** (ORS) establishes policies, procedures, and performance objectives for the DHS USCIS Records Program that manages over 160 million Alien-files and related records in support of the enforcement and benefits missions of the DHS; the ORS also manages and coordinates the the National Records Center, the USCIS Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) and the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) programs.

Office of Service Center Operations manages four regionally based Service Centers which receive, process and adjudicate applications, petitions and their related fees for immigration benefits not requiring face-to-face contact with the applicant, petitioner, or beneficiary. This component also oversees the operations of CIS document production operations at the production facility in Corbin, KY, and at two of the regional Service Centers. The Service Centers also provide data entry and card production support for some District Office and Asylum Office workloads, as well as all processing of immigrant visas for incoming immigrants.

- **The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity** ensure individuals are not denied opportunities in employment or program-services delivery because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or reprisal. This office does not report directly to USCIS, and is a shared service with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, another DHS component.
- **Office of Financial Management** executes financial management for the agency.
- **Office of Improvement and Integration** incubates special projects and ensures that ideas for improving USCIS business processes, organization, and technology are aligned with the blueprint for institutional modernization and evolution – in both business and technology terms – to improve USCIS’ ability to meet its mission.
- **Office of International Operations** oversees the adjudication process for asylum and refugee cases and the provision of immigration services at overseas locations. Operational divisions include Asylum Division, Refugee Affairs Division, and International Operations Division.
- **Office of Policy and Strategy** directs, prioritizes, and sets the agenda for agency-wide policy, strategy, and long-term planning activities, as well as for the conduct of research and analysis on immigration services issues.



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- **Office of Security and Investigations** has a range of responsibilities including oversight of COOP planning and implementation; secure communications and document storage; agency-wide physical and facility security programs; and security awareness training. In coordination with Fraud Detection and National Security Division, OSI has the lead role regarding **Office of Professional Responsibility** related management inquiries.
- **Office of Training and Career Development** provides continuous professional training and career development to all USCIS employees through a variety of career, executive, and managerial development programs. Responsibilities include basic training, training management, training operations, and training support services.



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USCIS Field Offices

There are many immigration field offices located throughout the United States and abroad that provide assistance with United States immigration issues.

Asylum Offices

USCIS has eight (8) Asylum Offices within the United States. The mission of the U.S. Asylum Program is to implement asylum laws to applicants who are already in the United States in a way that is fair, timely, and consistent with international humanitarian principles and our domestic tradition of providing refuge for the oppressed.

Application Support Centers (ASC)

Some immigration applications, such as the Application for Naturalization or the Application to Register for Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, require the USCIS to conduct a FBI fingerprint and background check on the applicant. Most applicants that require a background check will be scheduled to appear at a specific ASC for the capturing of “biometrics” such as fingerprints or digital photographs. In addition to capturing biometrics, ASCs may accept certain applications for benefits. ASCs are usually located close to immigrant populations. They may also be “co-located” in the same building as another USCIS field office but are staffed mainly by contractors.

Domestic Regional Offices

There are three Regional Offices that supervise the work of the immigration Districts. The Regional Directors report to the Director of Field Operations in Washington, DC. The three Regional Offices are located in (Eastern Region) Burlington, VT, (Central Region) Dallas, TX, and (Western Region) Laguna Niguel, CA.

Domestic District Offices

There are 33 USCIS District Offices in the United States. Each District Office, headed by a District Director, has a specific service area that may include part of a state or territory, an entire state, or several states. District Offices are where most immigration field staff is located. Certain applications are filed directly with District Offices; interviews that are required during the application process are conducted at these Offices; and immigration staff is available at these offices to meet with customers to answer questions, provide forms, etc.

Domestic Sub Offices

Some of USCIS’ District Offices that serve a large or geographically widespread population (e.g., Los Angeles, Atlanta) have Sub Offices that serve a portion of the District’s jurisdiction. A Sub Office, headed by an Officer-in-Charge, provides many of the same services offered by a District



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Office. Their locations are determined, in part, by the proximity to our customers. . Additionally, there are satellite offices, which may offer limited services to the public. Information about all of these offices may be found on the District home pages at www.uscis.gov.

International District Offices

There are three International Districts: Rome, Italy; Mexico City, Mexico; and Bangkok, Thailand. Each International District Office is headed by a District Director, and covers a specified service area that includes several countries. International District Offices accept certain applications and petitions for U.S. immigration benefits, and provide information and forms to the public. These offices and their Sub Offices work closely with the U.S. Department of State in various aspects of the visa-issuing process, maintain close liaison with agencies of the countries within their jurisdictions, and provide assistance to domestic USCIS offices relating to foreign law and foreign documentation. International District Offices also play significant adjudicative, logistical, and managerial roles in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program.

International Sub Offices

Each of the three International District Offices has Sub Offices that serve a portion of the District's jurisdiction. There are currently 28 such offices. Their locations have been determined on the basis of the need for services in the particular geographical area. International Sub Offices accept certain applications and petitions, provide information and forms to the public, work with the U.S. Department of State in the visa-issuing process, maintain liaison with appropriate foreign government agencies, assist domestic USCIS offices as required, and participate significantly in the U.S. Refugee Program.

National Benefits Center (NBC)

The National Benefits Center serves as the hub and conduit for USCIS Field Offices by completing pre-interview processing of many of the family-based adjustment of status petitions and applications (I-130/I-485) and associated ancillary applications. The NBC utilizes a Lockbox facility for fee receipting, fee deposit, and initial data entry of submitted Forms. After performing these functions, the Lockbox then ships the cases to the NBC for further processing, including conducting background security checks, performing initial evidence reviews, adjudication of associated I-765 and I-131 applications (filed with the I-485 or separately), denial of adjustment of status cases for applicants who are statutorily ineligible, and forwarding scheduled cases to the USCIS Field Office for adjudication. The NBC also processes Forms associated with the LIFE Act (Legal Immigration Family Equity Act) of 2000.



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National Records Center (NRC)

Opened on November 15, 1999, the NRC located at Lees Summit, Missouri is an underground facility of over 250,000 square feet that contains in its three main stack rooms approximately 19 million alien files (A-files). The NRC provides its customers with timely access to complete and accurate information on a 24/7 basis from alien files and subsidiary data systems in support of the national security and benefits missions of the Department of Homeland Security.

Service Centers

The four USCIS Service Centers in Vermont, Texas, California, and Nebraska were established to handle the mail, file, data entry, and adjudication for approximately 65% of applications received by USCIS. Service Centers do not conduct interviews with customers and are not staffed to handle walk-in applications or answer questions.

Telephone Centers

Through the National Customer Service Center's four telephone centers), USCIS provides toll-free nationwide assistance to customers calling from within the United States. Customers can access live assistance from 8:00AM until 6:00PM, Monday through Friday; they can access recorded information (including information about the status of their specific case) 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Both live and recorded service is available in English and Spanish. Callers from outside the U.S. can access more limited information through a separate toll number.

USCIS Training Academy

All USCIS officer corps training sessions are held at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) which is known within the federal community as 'GLYNCO'. Glynco is located in Glynn County, Georgia, just outside of Brunswick, Georgia, and is midway between Savannah, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida. Approximately 80 federal agencies conduct training at the FLETC which is now a component of the Department of Homeland Security. Courses offered at the USCIS Academy include Basic Training, Journeyman Training and Advanced Training.



USCIS Overview

USCIS Officer Corps Positions

In addition to thousands of analysts, specialists, and contract support staff, USCIS employs three officer corps positions:

Adjudications Officer

Each year millions of people apply for various types of immigration benefits from the United States government. The benefits they seek include permission to import foreign workers, permission for relatives to immigrate and permission to become American citizens. Adjudications Officers determine eligibility for this wide variety of benefits. They review applications and often conduct interviews of the applicants. Adjudications Officers have the dual responsibility of providing courteous service to the public while being alert to the possibility of fraud and misrepresentation and usually perform their duties in an office environment. District Adjudications Officers are located in the offices nationwide. Center Adjudications Officers are located only in the following Service Centers: St. Albans, VT; Lincoln, NE; Irving, TX; and Laguna Niguel, CA.

Asylum Officer

The Asylum Officer determines if an applicant for asylum satisfies the requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act while they are outside of the U.S., while they are in the U.S. or its borders or while awaiting deportation. These officers must be knowledgeable of human rights conditions around the world and possess a keen insight into human behavior in order to determine the credibility and consistency of information elicited through interviews they conduct. These positions are located in Asylum Offices throughout the United States.

Immigration Information Officer (IIO)

Each year hundreds of thousands of people apply for various types of benefits under the Immigration and Nationality law. The IIO provides information about immigration and nationality law and regulations. They assist with information necessary to complete required forms and explain the administrative procedures and normal processing times for each application. They provide a variety of customer services, including certain case services and problem resolution assistance on applications and petitions. They also process and make decisions on a limited array of applications and petitions. These positions are located throughout the country in Districts, Sub offices, and Service Centers.

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